CHAPTER 7

POST-TEST TASKS

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this Chapter, you should be able to:

1. Review and evaluate results of the field examination to determine compliance.

2. Determine the appropriate compliance action to be taken based upon evaluation of examination results.

3. Describe administrative procedures for notifying the owner of the action taken and any steps that must be taken to bring devices into compliance.

4. Describe procedures for affixing security seals, inspection stickers, and other markings.

5. Understand procedures for completing and submitting report forms and other documentation.

INTRODUCTION

After you have completed all the steps outlined in the Test portion of the EPO, several post-test tasks remain to be performed. Three major tasks are specified in the EPO's, as shown in Figure 7-1.

Security seal -- Apply physical seal or other approved means to secure adjusting mechanism. Note pertinent information from audit trail, if applicable.. . . . G-S.8., G-UR.4.5.

Note on the official report the amount of product dispensed during test.

After all equipment at a location has been tested, review results to determine compliance with equipment maintenance and use of adjustments. . . . . G-UR.4.1, G-UR.4.3.

Figure 7-1. Post-Test Tasks Specified in the EPO's

A few additional steps are necessary to complete the examination from an administrative point of view. To summarize, the major post-test tasks include:

- installation of the security seal on the meter adjustment mechanism (if removed) or documentation of audit trail information (if applicable)
- evaluation of all examination results
- determination of appropriate compliance action
- notification of the owner or operator of the device(s) of examination results
- marking the device(s) to indicate approval or rejection
- completion and submission of examination report forms and other required documentation

These post-test tasks will be described in the remaining sections of this chapter.

THE SECURITY SEAL

Some jurisdictions require that a new security seal be installed on the meter adjustment mechanism at the conclusion of each field examination. Others require a new seal only when a meter is examined for the first time, when the meter has been examined after required adjustments have been made, or if the seal is found to be damaged or broken. Your instructor will explain your jurisdiction's policy to you.

The adjusting mechanism for some mechanical registers is located between the register and the meter, and so is not accessible unless the two components are detached. The most efficient means of sealing such a system is to thread the security seal wire through a hole drilled through one of the bolts that fastens the register to the meter after the bolt is installed.

The seal is then affixed to the two ends of the security seal wire using, in the case of a lead-type seal, a special applicator called a sealing press. Your instructor will demonstrate the use of the sealing press in the classroom session devoted to this chapter. For some types of seals, a special locking clamp, which cannot be opened again without mutilating or destroying the seal, is snapped into place over the security seal wire. Other types of seals are affixed by threading the end of the security seal wire (which has small, raised ridges) through a hole in the seal; the ridges on the wire and the design of the seal prevent the wire from being pulled out without mutilating or destroying the seal.

When the security seal is properly installed, it should not be possible to detach the register from the meter without either cutting the wire or mutilating or destroying the seal.

The adjustor on most electronic registers is located behind a metal panel or cover on one side of the register. It is generally sealed by passing the seal wire through holes in the panel or cover and the register chassis.

Since the amendment of G-S.8. in the General Code in 1989 other approved means, such as an audit trail, may be used as a form of security. A review of the device's Certificate of Conformance will provide necessary information on sealing the device.

EVALUATING EXAMINATION RESULTS

Throughout the Inspection and Test you will have recorded results for each item. Since approval or rejection will depend upon these results, you should at this point review all items and identify any for which non-compliance has been determined. The most efficient means of doing this is to use a checklist that indicates compliance or non-compliance with each requirement, specification, or performance tolerance examined.

The report form used by your jurisdiction may provide such a checklist. If it does not, or if the list is not sufficiently comprehensive or specific, you may wish to use the EPO's, noting compliance or non-compliance for each item as you proceed.

DETERMINATION OF COMPLIANCE ACTION

Your evaluation of examination results should provide the basis for determining the appropriate compliance action. Separate determinations must be made for each meter examined at a location.

The first step is quite straightforward: you determine whether the device examined should be approved or rejected. To receive approval, the device must be "correct." In accordance with the General Code, this means that all items inspected or tested are in conformance with applicable requirements, specifications, and performance tolerances. Non-conformance for any item will generally lead to rejection (a specific class of exceptions to this general rule will be discussed below).

The inspector may, at his or her discretion and in accordance with jurisdiction policy, permit the owner or operator to make minor corrections at the time of the examination and grant approval if these corrections bring the device into full compliance. For example, dirt or grease obscuring the identification plate may be removed. However, all corrections requiring mechanical adjustment or reconditioning should be made by a qualified repairperson, and should be checked by the owner before reinspection of the device.

If approval is granted, this determination should be indicated on the official examination report. The report should then be signed by the inspector and a copy given to the owner for his or her records. In most jurisdictions, a notice or sticker showing the date of the examination and noting that the device has been approved is placed on the device itself or in some other conspicuous location.

If the device is not "correct," two compliance options are available: repair or rejection. The difference between these two non-approval categories is that rejection requires that the device be removed from service, while a repair notice permits continued use. A repair notice is granted for a non-conforming device only under the following special circumstances:

- The device is accurate -- that is, it conforms with applicable tolerances and other performance requirements -- but requires repair to meet some other requirement. For example, broken glass above the indicating elements will not impair the dispenser's accuracy, but does require repair.

- The device is inaccurate, but the inaccuracy will consistently favor the consumer. In this case, the owner must be informed of the extent of the inaccuracy so that he or she can decide whether to leave the device in service.

- The device is inaccurate, but removal from service as the result of a rejection notice would cause serious hardship to the general public. Though relatively rare, this situation does occur, especially in less populated areas that are served by small operators. For example, if fuel oil service in a rural county is provided by an operator with only one or two tank trucks, taking one of these vehicles out of service in the middle of winter, even for a matter of days, might cause a severe hardship to customers on its route. This exception should only be granted when the hardship is very clear, and outweighs the potential injury to the public that might result from overcharging. When there is any doubt, you should seek guidance from your supervisor.

A repair notice does not free the owner from the obligation of conforming with all requirements. It simply permits the device to be kept in operation until repairs are made. The notice should specify a number of days allowed for repairs to be completed. This period should be kept to a minimum. At the end of that time, if repairs have not been satisfactorily completed, a rejection notice may be issued.

If the device is not correct and a repair notice is not appropriate, a rejection notice must be issued. This notice should specify whether the device is to be removed from service temporarily (until required corrections are made) or permanently.

Upon rejection, the device is officially under control of the weights and measures jurisdiction -- even if it is allowed to remain physically at the commercial location -- until approval is granted. A nonremovable tag should be affixed to the device indicating that it has been removed from service. Procedures in some jurisdictions also require that a seal be installed on a rejected device in such a way as to physically prevent the operation of the device. Your instructor will explain any such procedures to you.

If repairs or reconditioning are required, the rejection notice should specify the number of days allowed. If corrections have not been satisfactorily completed by that time, you may order removal. You must exercise judgment in such cases; if a good faith effort has been made to effect repairs and the delay is unavoidable (for example, because needed replacement parts have not arrived from the distributor), an extension of time may be granted.

A removal order should be issued if the device must be physically removed from its location. The removal may be temporary or permanent.

- The device may be removed temporarily if required corrections have not been made satisfactorily or on time. The device should be removed if the inspector has reason to believe that the owner or operator intends to operate it fraudulently or in violation of laws and regulations, or if a court action is to be undertaken that may require the device as evidence. In any case, you must provide the owner with a receipt before physically removing the device from his or her property.

- A permanent removal order is issued if it is determined that the device is not suitable for the service for which it is being used. For example, a meter that is not capable of making its usual deliveries without exceeding its rated working pressure should be permanently removed from that service, though it might be installed by the operator on another vehicle

that is used for service for which the meter is suitable. When a permanent removal order is issued, the device remains under the control and possession of the owner. He or she is simply required to remove it from its current, improper service.

Finally, a condemnation order requires that the device be removed and destroyed. Such action is normally only appropriate in the rare circumstance that the device is unrepairable. In most cases, vehicle-tank meters can be corrected by repairing or reconditioning components. So a condemnation order for these devices will generally be necessary only when the owner has decided that repair will not be cost-effective (for example, when the cost of required repairs to an aging meter exceeds its value, or when replacement of the complete unit is preferable). A condemnation order may also be issued if a device seized as the result of a removal order is not claimed by the owner.

NOTIFYING THE OWNER OR OPERATOR

When you have determined an appropriate compliance action, you must notify the owner or operator of the disposition and discuss it with him or her. In the case of a non-compliance action, the owner or operator of the device must understand:

- why the action is being ordered
- what will happen as a result of the order (temporary or permanent removal from service, physical removal, condemnation, etc.)
- what actions must be taken to bring the equipment into compliance
- when corrections must be completed and the date and procedure for re-examination
- the consequences of failing to comply with the compliance order

You must give the owner or operator a copy of the official inspection report that indicates specific items of non-conformance. He or she should sign the report to establish its receipt: this signature does not necessarily indicate acceptance of the findings.

You should make every effort to explain specifically and in detail what is wrong with the device. It is not, however, your responsibility to troubleshoot mechanical or electrical problems or recommend specific repair procedures, and you should avoid doing so. Nor is it proper to recommend a repairperson or service by name, since this might be misconstrued as an official endorsement. Under no circumstances should you make repairs or adjustments yourself.

If the compliance order must be approved by your supervisor or some other official, indicate the recommendation you will be making and explain exactly what will happen if that recommendation is approved. If the owner can request reconsideration or appeal of a compliance order, you should explain the procedures for doing so. Remember that your purpose is to ensure that accurate and correct devices are used in the marketplace, not to mete out punishment for violations by administrative means. You must avoid imposing unreasonable or excessive burdens on sellers of products and services.

MARKING THE DEVICE

As mentioned above, each device examined should bear some indication of the date of the examination and the disposition (approval or rejection, etc.). Appropriate markings (stickers, tags, seals, etc.) affixed to the device or in some other conspicuous place provide assurance for customers and protect them from accidental or deliberate use of non-approved equipment. This marking should be performed immediately upon your determination of disposition and before you leave the examination site.

Your instructor will show you the various markings used by your jurisdiction and tell you how and where each of them should be applied.

REPORT FORMS AND RECORDKEEPING

Your instructor will show you how to complete the examination report forms that are used by your jurisdiction and will tell you how and when they should be submitted. In addition, other types of documentation or information may be appropriate. Examples of such additional recordkeeping are logs of telephone calls, conversations, or written correspondence with owners or operators, repairpersons, and supervisors. You will also find it useful to keep notes of problems encountered in the field and the compliance history of particular devices or operators.

Accurate, systematic, and comprehensive recordkeeping is as important a part of your job as the correct use of test equipment, mastery of examination procedures, or knowledge of codes and regulations.

SUMMARY

The last phase of a field examination begins with the evaluation of Inspection and Test results, followed by a decision whether to approve or reject the meter, order repairs, remove the device from the operator's possession, or condemn it for commercial use. Once you have decided which action to take, your decision is written on the examination report and a copy, signed by you, is given to the owner or operator, who must also sign it. The meter is then tagged or sealed to indicate the action taken. The last step in the examination is to be sure that all report forms and other recordkeeping tasks are completed. The examination is then completed.